

## Virginia Department of Veterans Services

# Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program

The Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (MSDEP) provides education benefits to spouses and children of military service members killed, missing in action, taken prisoner, or who became at least 90 percent disabled as a result of military service in an armed conflict.

Military service includes service in the United States Armed Forces, United States Armed Forces Reserves, the Virginia National Guard, or the Virginia National Guard Reserves. Armed conflict includes military operations against terrorism or as the result of a terrorist act, a peace-keeping mission, or any armed conflict after December 6, 1941. The purpose of this program is to provide undergraduate or other postsecondary education free of tuition and fees, and general or college fees. Benefits are available for up to four years.

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**What are the requirements for this program?**

To be eligible, children and spouses of qualifying military service members must meet the following requirements.

- The child must be between ages 16 and 29; there are no age restrictions for spouses.
- The military service member must have been a Virginia citizen at the time he or she entered active duty or must have been a Virginia citizen for at least five years immediately prior to the date of the application for admission.
- In the case of a deceased military service member, the surviving spouse can meet the residency requirements if he or she lived in Virginia for at least five years prior to marrying the military service member or has been a citizen of Virginia for at least five years immediately prior to the date of application.

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**Is the surviving spouse of a qualifying military service member eligible to attend school under this program?**

Yes, as long as the spouse meets the eligibility requirements for the program.

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**May I use my MSDEP benefits to attend a private school approved by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs?**

No. You may be entitled to receive federal educational subsistence at private schools approved by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; however, you may use your MSDEP benefits only at state-supported schools in Virginia.

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**May I use my MSDEP benefits to attend a state-supported institution in another state?**

No. You may use your MSDEP benefits to attend only state-supported schools in Virginia. You may not use them to attend a school in another state.

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**If I am entitled to benefits under MSDEP, am I guaranteed admission to a state-supported college or university?**

Eligibility for MSDEP benefits does not guarantee you admission to a state-supported college or university. Your admission is based on the school's admission requirements and your academic credentials.

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**May I attend two state-supported colleges or universities concurrently?**

Yes. You may attend two state-supported schools concurrently.

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**Does the four-year entitlement mean that my tuition and fees will be waived for an entire four years of college?**

Your tuition and fees will be waived for up to four years. Your benefits expire after four years whether or not you have completed your degree program.

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**May I use my MSDEP benefits for remedial or refresher education?**

Yes. However, each month of preparatory education will be charged against your entitlement of four years.

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**May I use part of my four years of entitlement for post-graduate education?**

Yes. If you are still eligible to attend school under MSDEP and you have unused entitlement, you may use your remaining entitlement for a post-graduate program at a state-supported institution.

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**May I use my MSDEP benefits after I reach age 29?**

If you are the child of a qualifying military service member, you must be between 16 and 29 years of age to qualify for MSDEP benefits. Your MSDEP benefits will cease when you reach your 30th birthday. If you are a spouse of a qualifying military service member, there are no age restrictions on when you may use your MSDEP benefits.

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**If I get married while attending school, do I lose my entitlement to educational benefits under the state's MSDEP program?**

No. An eligible student's marital status has no effect on his or her entitlement to MSDEP benefits.

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**If I have to interrupt my education for some reason, can my MSDEP benefits be reinstated at a later date?**

Yes. To reinstate your benefits:

1. You must request in writing that you wish to be reinstated.
  2. You must not be on academic suspension at the last school that you attended.
  3. You must be age 29 or younger if you are the child of a qualifying military service member.
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**Are there attendance or academic requirements that must be met to continue my eligibility under MSDEP?**

Yes. Your attendance and academic progress must be acceptable within the guidelines established by the school you are attending. If you are suspended from school for any reason, your benefits will be terminated from MSDEP.

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**If I do not successfully complete one of my courses, may I repeat it without charge?**

Yes. Tuition and fees will be waived; however, your entitlement to benefits under MSDEP will be reduced for each month you are in school whether you pass or fail a course. If you fail and repeat too many courses, you risk running out of MSDEP entitlement before completing your education.

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**May I be reinstated in MSDEP if I have been suspended from school?**

If you are readmitted by the school that suspended you, it is possible that your MSDEP benefits may be reinstated. However, you will be responsible for paying your tuition and required fees for the first semester after you are readmitted. If you make satisfactory academic progress during the first semester after you are readmitted, you will be reinstated in MSDEP. The tuition and required fees you paid will be refunded to you. On the other hand, if you do not make satisfactory academic progress, you will not be reinstated in MSDEP. The school will not be obligated to refund any of the tuition or fees you paid.

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**If I withdraw from school, will it affect my four years of entitlement to MSDEP benefits?**

If you voluntarily withdraw from school before the final withdrawal date, your attendance will not be counted against your entitlement. However, if you withdraw after the last date to withdraw without penalty, the entire semester will be deducted from your four years of entitlement.

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**If I have other questions about my benefits under MSDEP, who can I talk to?**

Feel free to call or write the Virginia Department of Veterans Services. We are here to help and will be happy to provide you with information or assistance. You can reach us at:

Virginia Department of Veterans Services  
270 Franklin Road, S.W.  
Room 503  
Roanoke, VA 24011.  
(540) 857-7104  
Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m.—4:30 p.m.

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